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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 IO-13 AF-10 ARA-10 EA-10
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R 121714Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1171
INFO USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 20203

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: SHUM, UK
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: MEETING BETWEEN ASST SECRETARY
DERIAN AND FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN

SUMMARY: ASSISTANT SECRETARY PAT DERIAN MET WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY DAVID OWEN DEC 9. SUBJECTS DISCUSSED INCLUDED HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECTS OF A) THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE; B) ESTABLISHMENT OF A UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER; C) THE ROLE OF FRANCE; AND D) NATIONAL POLICY TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS. OWEN INVITED FURTHER CONSULTATION WITH THE UK WHENEVER THE U.S. BELIEVED THE BRITISH COULD ASSIST ON HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

1. AT BRITISH INITIATIVE, FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN MET WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY DERIAN AT THE FCO ON DEC 9. ALSO PRESENT WERE UK PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY EVAN LUARD (THE RANKING FCO OVERSEER OF HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS); DAVID STEPHENS, POLITICAL ADVISOR TO THE FOREIGN SECRETARY; CLIFFORD BRODY, DEPT OFFICER, AND EMBOFF. FOLLOW-
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ING SUMMARY WAS NOT SEEN BY MS. DERIAN OR BRODY PRIOR TO THEIR DEPARTURE FROM LONDON.

2. OWEN OPENED THE MEETING BY ASKING WHERE THE U.S. HAD BEEN DISAPPOINTED BY BRITISH ATTITUDES AND WHERE THE U.S. THOUGHT THE UK COULD DO MORE. MS. DERIAN RESPONDED THAT IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD THERE IS NO RIGHT OR

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WRONG WAY OF SEEKING TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS. ONE PROBLEM IS THE TENDENCY OF THE PRESS TO INSIST ON A BALANCE SHEET AT THE END OF A GIVEN PERIOD, WHEREAS THERE ARE TOO MANY FACTORS INVOLVED ADEQUATELY TO MEASURE PROGRESS. STEADY EFFORT IS REQUIRED.

3. TURNING TO BELGRADE, MS. DERIAN SAID THE U.S. WAS NOT HAPPY WITH THE OPENING BRITISH SPEECH AT BELGRADE. OWEN NODDED AGREEMENT, ACKNOWLEDGING HE HAD NOT PERSONALLY REVIEWED BRITISH DRAFT FOR THAT OCCASION. HOWEVER, BRITISH STRATEGY HAD BEEN TO START QUIETLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS AT BELGRADE AND ESCALATE THE ISSUE AS THE CONFERENCE PROCEEDED. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT THE WEST NEED NOT CLAIM GREAT SUCCESS FOR THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE. HE REITERATED HIS PUBLIC COMMENTS (LONDON 19754) THAT THE WEST COULD ACCEPT A SHORT, MINIMAL COMMUNIQUE. IN OWEN'S VIEW, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO GET A COMMITMENT FROM THE SOVIETS THAT MONITORING OF THE HELSINKI ACT BY INDIVIDUALS IS A LEGITIMATE ACTIVITY. HE ALSO REFERRED TO HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH GROMYKO IN OCTOBER WHERE HE STRESSED THAT SOVIET TRIALS (E.G., SHARANSKY) AFTER BELGRADE HAD CONCLUDED COULD WELL CAUSE AN "EXPLOSION" IN WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION. OWEN SAID GROMYKO TOOK HIS COMMENTS WELL AND THAT HE (OWEN) THINKS THE SOVIETS WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO AS LONG AS THEY ARE NOT PUBLICLY PRESSED ON INDIVIDUAL CASES.
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4. MS. DERIAN THEN TURNED TO THE UN DEBATE ON ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. SHE SUGGESTED THAT NEXT YEAR THE U.S. SHOULD RE-EXAMINE THE UN PARLIAMENTARY SITUATION AND SEE IF THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO APPROACH THE PROBLEM. OWEN EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSIONER BUT CAUTIONED THAT WE SHOULD NOT DELUDE OURSELVES THAT EXISTENCE OF THE POST WILL MAKE MUCH PRACTICAL DIFFERENCE. LUARD TOOK A MORE UPBEAT TACK, NOTING THE COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS COULD GIVE NEEDED PUBLICITY TO OVERLOOKED SITUATIONS SUCH AS IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA.

5. OWEN VOLUNTEERED THAT FRANCE IS AN IMPORTANT COUNTRY THAT SHOULD BE "CAPTURED" IN A MORE ACTIVE HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. HE SURMISED SUCH A POSTURE WOULD APPEAL TO GISCARD IN THIS (FRENCH) ELECTION YEAR AND FRENCH ACTIVISM WOULD BE HELPFUL IN LINING UP GREATER SUPPORT FROM FRANCOPHONE AFRICANS. OWEN INDICATED THE UK WAS ALSO STEPPING UP ITS LOBBYING ACTIVITIES IN THESE COUNTRIES.

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6. IN RESPONSE TO OWEN'S QUESTION, MS. DERIAN DESCRIBED

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THE INTERAGENCY PROCEDURES BY WHICH THE US PROVIDES FOR ADEQUATE CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS FACTORS IN OUR POLICIES TOWARD INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING THE IDB AND IADB. OWEN INDICATED THAT BRITISH BANKING OFFICIALS RESISTED "POLITICIZING" OF BRITISH GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE, BUT THAT FINAL DECISIONS ARE MADE IN THE MINISTRY OF OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT, WHICH IS UNDER FOREIGN OFFICE CONTROL. MS. DERIAN TOLD OWEN THAT OTHER COUNTRIES SHOULD REALIZE THAT HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS ARE BECOMING AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS U.S. CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL BANKS. SHE OBSERVED THAT THE VOTES OF CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES TRADITIONALLY OPPOSED TO FOREIGN AID ARE JOINED MORE AND MORE BY THOSE REPRESENTATIVES OPPOSED TO AIDING GOVERNMENTS WITH POOR HUMAN RIGHTS RECORDS. IF THESE TRENDS CONTINUE, U.S. CONTRIBUTIONS WILL DECLINE.

7. IN CONCLUSION, OWEN INVITED MS. DERIAN TO INFORM HIM
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OF ANY HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS ON WHICH THE USG WOULD LIKE BRITISH ASSISTANCE OR A MORE ACTIVE BRITISH STANCE.

8. IN FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSIONS WITH EVAN LUARD, MRS. DERIAN STRESSED THE PROBLEMS OF ACCOMMODATING THE VIETNAMESE "BOAT CASES" AND THE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN ARGENTINA. BRITISH PARTICIPANTS OBSERVED THAT HMG FINDS THE MOST EFFECTIVE PRESSURE ON TARGET COUNTRIES IS EXERTED PRIVATELY DURING BILATERAL VISITS AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL. HOWEVER, THE UK IS IN NO POSITION TO EXERT MUCH PRESSURE ON SUCH GOVERNMENTS AS ARGENTINA OR CAMBODIA OR OTHERWISE TO CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE REFUGEE PROBLEMS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. THE BRITISH ARE NEVERTHELESS STRONGLY INTERESTED IN IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND ITS PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN SPECIFIC COUNTRIES.

9. COMMENT: MEETING WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY DERIAN WAS IMPORTANT TO OWEN, WHO APPEARED EAGER TO DEMONSTRATE IN THIS WAY THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF USG COMMENTS ON UK CAUTIOUSNESS AT BELGRADE. FACT PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS WERE PRESENT AT OPENING OF SESSION INDICATED OWEN INTENDED SIGNAL TO REACH HOME AUDIENCE AS WELL AS USG. IN ANY CASE, FROM EMBASSY VIEWPOINT MEETING WAS HELPFUL IN FURTHER SENSITIZING HMG TO HUMAN RIGHTS EMPHASIS IN FOREIGN POLICY AND TO ENCOURAGING BRITISH ACTIVISM ON SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS WORLD-WIDE.

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